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Your essential daily news | WEEKEND, JANUARY 6-8, 2017 | High -19°C/Low -27°C Still so cold

Credit card ceasefire

RETAIL

Walmart, Visa call truce in half-year battle over fees

Corporate behemoths Walmart Canada and Visa have declared a truce in their dispute over merchant fees, allowing Walmart customers in Manitoba and Thunder Bay, Ont., to resume using the credit card beginning Friday.

Both companies said they came to an agreement but did not provide details, calling the arrangement confidential.

Walmart began refusing Visa credit cards at its three stores in Thunder Bay in mid-July. It said it pays more than $100 million in fees every year for customers to use various brands of credit cards, and that the fees charged by Visa were excessive.

That set off a widely watched battle within the retail sector that intensified in October, when Walmart expanded its policy of rejecting Visas to its 16 stores in Manitoba. The retail giant had said it was planning to expand its phase-out of Visa to all of its 400 stores in Canada.

The months-long dispute became so heated that at one point Visa offered its cardholders in Manitoba a reward for buying their groceries somewhere other than Walmart. It launched an advertising campaign in November offering Manitoba Visa cardholders a $10 credit if they spent $50 or more at grocery stores.

The campaign didn't explicitly mention Walmart or the fee dispute, but a Visa spokeswoman said at the time that the company was hoping to ease any inconvenience for Visa cardholders who can't use their cards everywhere that they want to.

Visa ran a similar ad in Thunder Bay, promising cardholders there with a $25 credit for every grocery purchase of $75 or more.

Visa previously said it had offered Walmart one of the lowest rates for any merchant in the country, and that if it gave in to the retailer's demands then other merchants would want a reduction in their fees, as well.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

The United States' Luke Kunin celebrates his team's second goal on Canada's Carter Hart in the second period in Montreal Thursday.
RYAN REMIORZ/THE CANADIAN PRESS

HEARTBREAKER

Canada falls to the U.S. in a shootout at the world junior championship, metroSPORTS

metro NEWS

Your essential daily news

Princess Diana's handwritten letters fetch thousands at auction. **World**

5 THINGS GOING ON IN THE CITY THIS WEEKEND

JESSICA BOTELHO-URBANSKI/FOR METRO

1 Musical dream team

Million Dollar Quartet spotlights an actual meeting of classic rock royalty one night in 1956 when Sun Records founder Sam Philips brought together Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, Carl Perkins and Jerry Lee Lewis for an impromptu riff. The Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre musical runs until Jan. 28 at RMTC (174 Market Ave.).

ROBERT TINKER/ROYAL MANITOBA THEATRE CENTRE

MANITOBA MUSEUM

2 Last chance for Nonsuch

Not ready to let go of the holidays yet? Stop by the Manitoba Museum over the weekend for a trip back to the Christmas era of 17th-century England while exploring the Nonsuch Gallery. It's the last chance this season to sneak a peek at the cargo hold of the massive replica of a ship that sailed the Hudson Bay. Visiting hours are 1 to 4 p.m. Friday through Sunday.

3 Snowshoe Saturdays ...and Sundays

Only in Winnipeg could you find two regular snowshoeing events to attend. On Saturdays, Fort Whyte Alive hosts a guided snowshoe tour from 10:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. Admission is free, while snowshoe rentals cost extra. On the first and last Sunday of each month, the Living Prairie Museum will be open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. (weather permitting) with snowshoe rentals on site.

CREATIVE COMMONS

4 First First Friday of the Year

The monthly Exchange District free-for-all is back for 2017, welcoming curious onlookers inside galleries, artists' studios and stores until late on the first Friday night of each month. A few new art shows open Friday, including a solo exhibit of drawings and prints by Montreal-based artist Jeanette Johns — To Step is to Rise — at Lisa Kehler Art + Projects (171 McDermot Ave.) and an exhibit of indigenous beadwork, The Life of Beads, by Maureen Matthews at MAWA (611 Main St.).

MAWA

5 Dancing with depth

WINNIPEG'S CONTEMPORARY DANCERS

Winnipeg's Contemporary Dancers' newest show is a world premiere from a local choreographer.

Directed by Brent Lott, As Though I Had Wings drew inspiration from poetry, art, social activism and events surrounding the AIDS epidemic. Expect a collage of mediums alongside dance, including original music by Shirley and Will Grieson, live upright bass performed by Ashley Au, video by jaymze and poetry by Jaik Josephson.

Performances start at 8 p.m. and run Jan. 5 to 8 at the Rachel Browne Theatre (204-211 Bannatyne Ave.).

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Every point counts if Jets have a hope of making the playoffs

HOCKEY

Team is still within reach of the post-season — just barely

Braeden Jones
Jones on Jets

Winnipeg Jets centre Mark Scheifele scores against Florida Panthers goalie Roberto Luongo on Wednesday in Sunrise, Fla. The Jets won 4-1. ALAN DIAZ/THE CANADIAN PRESS

"Survival." That's how Winnipeg Jets head coach Paul Maurice summed up the first half of his team's 2016-17 season, which officially concluded with a 4-1 win in Florida Wednesday night.

The victory followed another in sunny Tampa, and the back-to-back wins have set the Jets' record back to .500 (19-19-3, 41 points).

It isn't great, but the road so far hasn't been easy. The Jets began the season as one of the league's youngest teams. And as the team's list of injured players grew, the Jets became even younger with consistent call-ups from the Manitoba Moose.

Throw in some bad bounces, bottom-feeding special-teams performances, goal droughts from veterans and statistically just-passable goaltending and there was plenty for the Jets to endure.

The question now is whether the team "survived enough," as Maurice put it, to be in the playoff race.

"We have to put a push in the second half to get back into the mix, but I believe we're close enough to do that," Maurice told reporters after Wednesday's game.

Statistically speaking, coach could be right.

Despite being unable to string together wins, the scrappy, hit-and-miss Jets are technically within reach of the post-season — barely.

To look at it deeper, handy websites like sportsclubstats.com calculate each team's odds of making the playoffs by holding the season-to-date win/loss history up against countless weighted simulations of the remaining schedule.

Given the opportunity to win or lose every remaining game in myriad combinations, the team is then given a percentage of simulated seasons in which it makes or does not make the playoffs.

Those odds and how they change moving forward can be predicted. They adjust based on future wins and losses, or how well the team makes that "push in the second half" Maurice talked about.

On Thursday, sportsclubstats.com calculated the Jets have a 22.5 per cent chance of making the playoffs, or did so in 22.5 per cent of the website's simulations of the rest of the season, but that doesn't really tell the whole story.

If the first half of the season was about survival, the second half of the season has to be about winning.

To even have a hope, the Jets need to get out of survival mode, and simply win more in the second half.

Matching their first-half pace will equal just slim playoff chances at best (0.3 per cent), and another team making a stronger push (such as Vancouver, Dallas or Los Angeles) could send captain Blake Wheeler and the boys to the golf course early.

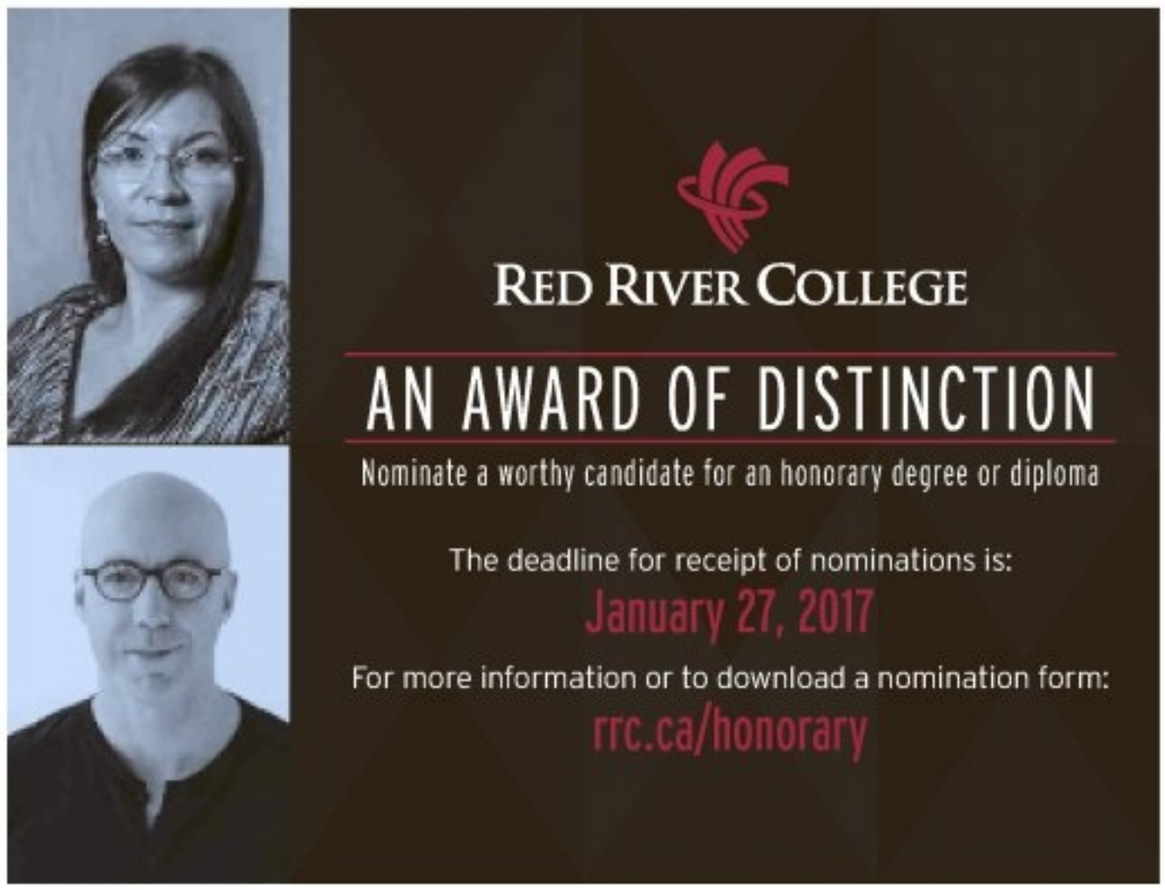
In order to defy being derailed that way in the last 41 games, the Jets need a record of at least 20-15-6, which would give them only a 16.3 per cent chance of making the playoffs at season's end based on the sportsclubstats.com simulations.

But 21-14-6 comes with 41.5 per cent odds, and 22-14-5 earns them a whopping 50 per cent chance.

So is there hope? Yes, some. But it's clear that every game and every point for the rest of the season matters for the Jets if they are to fight their way into the playoff picture.

UP NEXT

The Jets will play the Buffalo Sabres in Buffalo, N.Y., on Saturday at noon.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Teen arrested for murder

CRIME

Tyler Kirton, 25, was shot dead close to Watt Street

Lucy Scholey
Metro | Winnipeg

Winnipeg police have arrested a 16-year-old suspect following the city's first murder of 2017.

Tyler Kirton, 25, was found lying on the roadway in the area of Thames Avenue and Watt Street on Jan. 3. Police say they responded to reports of gunshots at around 9:55 p.m.

Kirton was rushed to hospital, where he was pronounced dead. His sister, Raina Scott, has started a crowd-sourcing page to raise $8,000 for the funeral costs.

The page describes Kirton as humble, giving and hilarious. "He went out of his way to protect his family, including all of his brothers and sisters and both parents," it reads.

"Whoever knew Tyler all had the same opinion, you couldn't help but love him because there was never a time he wouldn't make you laugh."

Homicide investigators arrested and charged the teen in connection to Kirton's homicide. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Tyler Kirton, 25, was murdered on Jan. 3. GOFUNDME

NEW YEAR'S EVE

Anti-Semitic hate crime investigated

Winnipeg police are investigating after a couple say they came home New Year's Eve to find a large rock painted with an anti-Semitic message near their front steps.

B'nai Brith says the homeowners in a residential neighbourhood west of the city's downtown found the rock in a red gift bag wrapped in a red ribbon.

The words "Die Jew Bitch" were scrawled on one side of the rock in red paint while a swastika and the word "Einsatzgruppen" was painted on the other.

The Einsatzgruppen were mobile Nazi death squads and killed Jews — and many others — during the Holocaust.

The red ribbon had another anti-Semitic slur on it and the words "get out of neighbourhood."

Police say they are taking the incident seriously and investigating it as a hate crime but a spokesperson was not available to comment further.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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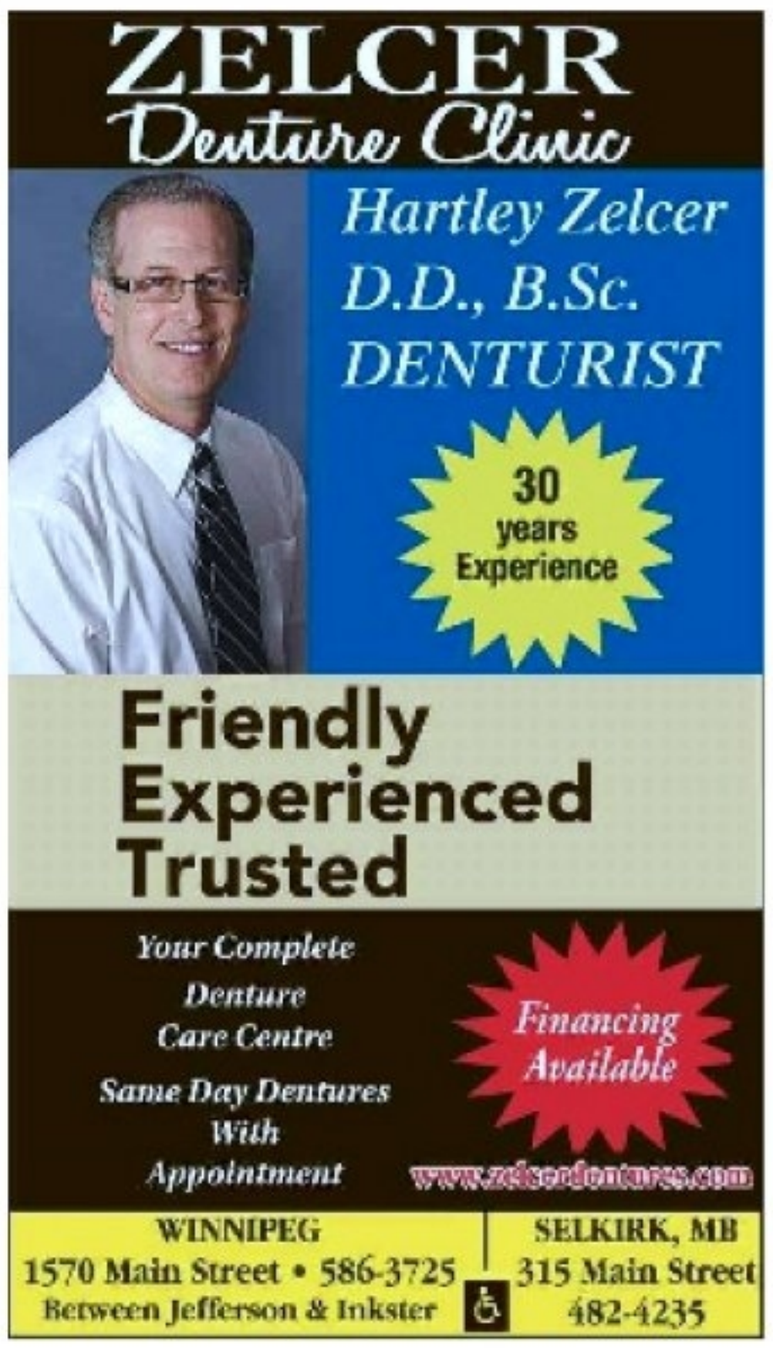

Winter carnival gets second wind

FESTIVAL

Group hopes to launch event next December

Stephanie Taylor
Metro | Winnipeg

Winnipeg Hydro Electric ice arch at Winnipeg Winter Carnival held on grounds of Manitoba legislative building.
COURTESY UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA ARCHIVES

A local design firm hopes to bring the energy of the 1920s back to Winnipeg by resurrecting a winter carnival that once stood outside the Manitoba Legislature.

Jason Syvixay, an HTFC Planning & Design planner and former staffer with the Downtown Winnipeg BIZ, says he's in preliminary talks with different local groups about how to get more people outside in the winter.

One of the ideas that emerged was to bring back a winter carnival — which featured a giant skating rink — on the legislature grounds in the 1920s.

"We know that Winnipeg has really received a spotlight when it comes to winter tourism and more and more out of province visitors are looking to Winnipeg for our attractions in the winter," Syvixay said on Thursday.

"Memorial Park would be fantastic for something like a winter ice rink."

Because old, grainy photos of the carnival were recently shared on social media, Syvixay thinks there's appetite for a modern-day version of the event.

Multiple groups and sponsors would first have to get on board with the project, Syvixay added, saying the hope is to launch the carnival next December or January 2018.

"This is an opportunity to hear from the public because it is so preliminary," he said. "We'd love to hear from people."

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N.Y. Times plugs Ottawa

PROFILE

Officials look forward to a potential tourism boost

Dylan C. Robertson
For Metro | Ottawa

Ottawa's tourist sector is celebrating a glowing New York Times report published Thursday, on the city "emerging from the shadow of Montreal and Toronto."

The paper's 36 Hours in Ottawa report invites visitors to poke around the Château Laurier, sip wine on Sparks Street and get "a consummately Canadian sugar rush" of BeaverTails.

"To get on people's wish lists, you need articles like this," says Ottawa Tourism spokeswoman Jantine Van Kregten. "You need concrete examples of why someone would want to go there."

A 2007 Times article with the same title stuck to downtown, but Thursday's story ventures to Hintonburg and Centretown, which Van Kregten says speaks to the city's emerging neighbourhoods.

A glowing New York Times report "did a really good job at capturing Ottawa." ISTOCK

"The author did a really good job at capturing Ottawa," she said. "You can piece together a really kick-ass weekend by what the New York Times has shared."

Craig MacDonald, director of Ottawa Walking Tours, says media coverage plays a "huge" role in planting the idea of visiting in someone's head, or solidifying it.

"The larger the newspaper, the more likely you are to have them come up here," said MacDonald, who's thrilled the U.S. dollar is keeping high as Canada 150 events kick off.

"We're looking forward to a fantastic year."

Unlike its January 2015 report on the ByWard Market, the Times' opted against recommending the Wine Rack. That article "created some buzz" for Amanda May Lingerie.

"We had a lot of friends and family share the article which got us some new customers and had a few tourists over the summer stop by, thanks to the article," May said.

MEDIA

Buzz

Canada has made a lot of international news recently as a place to visit and watch. Here are some examples:

1. New York Times delved into the differences between Canadian and American Thanksgiving

2. The Guardian devoted a series to our country by launching Canada Week, with a peek at five Canadian cities

3. Lonely Planet named Canada the best place to travel in 2017

4. Vogue lusted over Prime Minister Justin Trudeau with an intimate photoshoot where he was pictured embracing wife Sophie Grégoire-Trudeau

TURKEY

Canadian charged for 'insulting' Erdogan

A Canadian woman has been arrested in Turkey for allegedly insulting the country's president in comments posted on Facebook, her Turkish lawyer said Thursday.

Ece Heper, 50, was arrested in the city of Kars in northeastern Turkey, and charged on Dec. 30, Sertac Celikkaleli said.

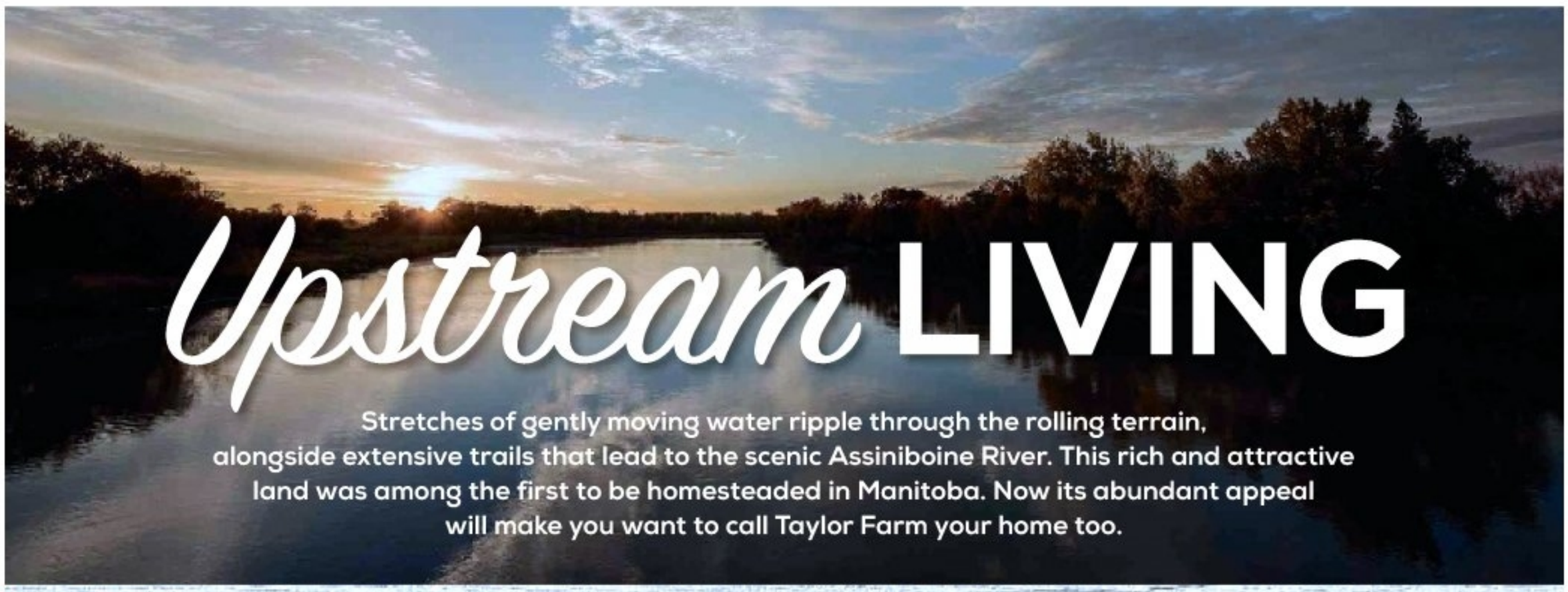
Heper, a dual Canadian-Turkish citizen, had been in the country since mid-November, according to her friends.

"She is intense and opinionated, for sure," Birgitta Pavic said from her Toronto home.

At issue, her friends and lawyer said, are several recent Facebook posts about President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

In one posted on Dec. 28, Heper accused Erdogan of jailing journalists who suggest there is evidence Turkey is supporting Daesh.

Global Affairs Canada said they are aware of a Canadian citizen detained in Turkey and are providing consular assistance, but wouldn't divulge further information. THE CANADIAN PRESS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Protesters rally against Donald Trump outside of Trump Tower in New York on Nov. 3. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

A chance to speak up

Those who've signed on to the Women's March have agreed to fight for equality — and to stand united

ROSEMARY WESTWOOD
From the U.S.

Here's your motto for 2017, courtesy of the columnist Connie Schultz: "Your voice matters, but only if you use it."

Thus, hundreds of thousands marching in Washington and 47 U.S. states is a perfect start to the era of Trump. A critical, powerful first step to make dissenting voices heard.

And yet the Women's March on Washington — a movement set for Jan. 21 to defend the rights of women, LGBTQ people, Muslims and those of all faiths, racialized people and ultimately all people — has already been deemed useless by some.

Feminists are "making Trump's threat about themselves," argued Shikha Dalmia in The Week. Trump and his Republican-controlled capital aren't actually a threat to women. It's just feminists getting hysterical and responding with "a confused and pointless march," she writes.

Leaving aside the worn-out misogyny of arguing that the women's movement is a shriek-fest, this kind of put-down about focus is the kind of pre-packaged criticism you could throw at any movement, of any era, at any time.

Those who've signed on have in fact agreed to something: They've agreed to fight for equality, inclusivity and to stand united against threats that will inevitably hit the most marginalized, first. And most importantly, they've agreed to be vocal about it.

The march is an opportunity to galvanize action that will need to be sustained for years. It's a reminder to Republicans — who lost the popular vote, who gerrymandered and vote-suppressed their way into victories — that they have the rest of the country to answer to. Not just their voters.

GLOBAL DIGEST

UNITED KINGDOM

Harry 'constantly in trouble,' Princess Diana letter says

Letters sent by Britain's late Princess Diana — including one in which she described a young Prince Harry as being "constantly in trouble" while at boarding school — sold for thousands of pounds at an auction Thursday.

The six handwritten notes were sent to Cyril Dickman, a former head steward at Buckingham Palace, during the 1980s and 1990s.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

IRAQ

Attacks in Baghdad kill 27

Several attacks in and around Baghdad, including a suicide car bombing in a busy commercial area after nightfall on Thursday, killed at least 27 people in a particularly brutal day in the Iraqi capital.

The suicide bomber, who targeted shops and food stands near a bus station in the city's busy Bab al-Muadam area, killed 11, a police officer said. He says the bombing also wounded at least 22 people. Earlier in the day, bombings elsewhere in and around Baghdad killed at least 16 people and wounded dozens, officials said.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

UNITED STATES

Hate-crime charges filed in Chicago attack on mentally disabled man

Four black people were charged with hate crimes Thursday in connection with a video broadcast live on Facebook that showed a mentally disabled white man being beaten and taunted, threatened with a knife and forced to drink from a toilet.

The assault went on for hours, until Chicago police found the disoriented victim walking along a street. The suspects can be heard on the video using profanities against white people and Donald Trump.

It's also possible that the suspects were trying to extort something from the victim's family, police said.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Cast of Million Dollar Quartet, photo by Robert Tinker

metro SCIENCE

Your essential daily news

Naps power brains: A study of Chinese seniors found getting an hour of shut-eye in the afternoon could slow down age-related memory loss

DECODED by Genna Buck and Andrés Plana

ON THE VERGE OF GREAT SCIENCE

2016 was a standout year. Canadian researchers played a weighty role in observing gravitational waves for the first time, NASA's JUNO spacecraft arrived on Jupiter, and the gene-editing technology CRISPR came into its own. **2017 could be even more exciting. Here's what's on the global science agenda.**

1 The black hole in our backyard

If you think a solar eclipse is the coolest celestial scene we're going to see in 2017, think again. Early this year, scientists are set to take the first-ever snapshot of an event horizon — the "point of no return" — where stuff, like hot gas and dust, gets sucked into a black hole. The black hole in question, Sagittarius A*, is right at the centre of our very own Milky Way galaxy, just 26,000 light-years away. If the predictions of Einstein's theory of general relativity are correct, it should appear as a crescent of bright gases surrounding a dark spot, and the size of the shadow it casts should be very close to current calculations. Talk about the ultimate test.

2 Synthetic blood

Blood transfusions are a miracle of modern medicine. Before the science of blood typing became accurate and reliable in the 20th century, there wasn't much of anything to be done for someone who needed blood. But there's still a perplexing problem —transfusions require an endless supply of healthy human volunteers willing to donate. Soon, that could change. In 2017, a British clinical trial is going to transfuse volunteers with synthetic blood for the first time. Because the blood cells are grown from donated stem cells, it might be more accurately called engineered or lab-grown blood. Whatever we call it, it could revolutionize medical care for people who've suffered from bleeding or bleeding disorders.

3 Planet 9 from outer space

Far, far, away, but in our galaxy, scientists believe there's a large, icy planet on the outer edge of our solar system. It only orbits Earth once every 15,000 years or so. We haven't seen it (just objects orbiting it), but several teams around the world have telescopes trained on the spot they believe Planet 9 may be lurking.

4 A major victory against malaria

2017 may well be remembered as the year we finally tamed one of the greatest killers in human history: Plasmodium, the mosquito-borne parasite that causes malaria. We're getting closer than ever to a malaria vaccine that actually works. And it's made of the malaria parasite itself, just engineered without three key genes that help it invade the liver. The first human trials, published this week in the journal Science Translational Medicine, found the vaccine is safe, doesn't cause too many side effects, and stimulates the body's immune response to malaria. The coolest part? The researchers gave the dummy parasite to patients the same way they'd get the real one: not in a syringe, but through the bite of an infected mosquito. The next steps are to test it on more people and determine how vaccinated patients fare when exposed to the disease.

If the results are good, a vaccine will fight malaria in a way no insecticide, protective gear or bed netting could. Resolution 2018: Kiss malaria goodbye for good.

5 Quantum computers

All modern computing is based on binary code: A series of numbers called "bits" that can be in one of two states: 0 or 1. Because quantum physics is crazy, tiny subatomic particles (like photons, the stuff light is made of) can be in more than one state at the same time (such as up, down, or both). Because of this, quantum computers have the potential to do super-complex calculations today's computers can't handle. Until now, it's been mostly theoretical. But some scientists believe we'll see quantum computers IRL in 2017. Both Google and Microsoft have quantum projects in the works.

FINDINGS
Your week in science

NASA

PLUTO'S PENITENTES
Penitentes: spectacular spires of natural ice, stretching as far as the eye can see, are famously found in the Andes. Now York University researchers say penitentes made of methane and nitrogen are on Pluto, too.

SINGLE IN THE SUBURBS
Find suburbia depressing? It's not just you. When humans invade their forest homes, certain songbirds — including the Pacific wren and Swainson's thrush — flee the area, fail to breed bird babies, and even "divorce" from their long-term mates, says a 10-year study of the Seattle area.

SOUND SMART

TRANS NEPTUNIAN OBJECT

DEFINITION
A **trans-Neptunian object** is any object in our solar system that orbits beyond Neptune. Pluto is one **trans-Neptunian** object out of more than 70,000 that measure at least 100 km across.

USE IT IN A SENTENCE
Deborah is being such a pain that I'd love to stick her on a spaceship and send her to live on a **trans-Neptunian object** on the outer reaches of our solar system.

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MOVIES MUSIC TELEVISION DIGITAL

Richard Crouse
For Metro Canada

Clouds over Hollywood

Awards season is upon us but with many questions hanging over the movie industry, it's not really time to celebrate. Here are Metro's thoughts on clearing the skies.

Hollywood is facing many questions about its future direction. Metro thinks greater influence and impact from the likes of, left to right, Ava DuVernay, Kristen Stewart and Guillermo Del Toro would go a long way to helping. GETTY IMAGES/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

It's awards season, a heady time when the movie biz pats itself on the back for a job well done. Tuxedoes are rented, Botox injected by the gallon and hundreds of miles of red carpets unfurled as industry insiders honour the best of the best with statues and speeches.

But is it really a time for celebration? The movie biz had a record-breaking year, raking in north of $11.4 billion on the backs of, as one industry insider said, "a forgetful fish, infighting superheroes and some intergalactic rebels."

But for every Finding Dory, Captain America or Rogue One, which all earned good reviews and audience support, there were dozens of others that acted as public repellent, driving viewers away in droves. Those unsuccessful movies are dark clouds hanging heavy over the Hollywood landscape. Metro has some thoughts on how to clear the skies and ensure smooth sailing until Hollywood runs out of awards to hand out.

Let's spend more time watching imaginative new worlds and ideas brought to life on the screen. Give me more movies from Guillermo Del Toro, Edgar Wright and Andrea Arnold, filmmakers who constantly reinvent our relationship with story and cinema.

Although I'm looking forward to John Wick 2 and Skull Island, let's cut back on the reboots, reimaginings, remakes and films with numbers in their titles.

Let Kristen Stewart do anything she wants. Her death-defying leap from a Young Adult idol to indie star has been inspiring to watch. She digs deeper and deeper with every role, distancing herself from the teeny-bopper image that defined the early part of her career. Her choices are wild and woolly and you don't know what to expect next from her. More please.

No more 'interesting' movies from Will Smith. His over-thinking has done more collateral damage to his once towering career than his last film, Collateral Beauty.

More convulsive belly laughs triggered by thoughtful, interesting jokes please. That means fewer films that mistake politically incorrect "did he really just say that?" jokes for actual humour.

Can we have more reliance on the human touch on screen; directors like Jim Jarmusch, Mira Nair and Barry Jenkins who use instinct and experience to create their art.

Let's have less studio reliance on branding, formula and script algorithms like ScriptBook, ScripThreads and Slated. Successful movie ideas don't come from marketing departments or mathematical analysis, they come from the hearts and minds of interesting storytellers.

"For every Finding Dory, Captain America or Rogue One, which all earned good reviews and audience support, there were dozens that acted as public repellent.

We need more films that pass both the Bechdel Test (does the movie feature a scene where two women discuss something other than a man?) as well as the DuVernay Test (do the African American and other minority characters have fully realized lives or are they just scenery in white stories?) If the answer is yes to either of these questions, you'll have more films that better reflect the world we live in.

Finally, it's time for Hollywood to be truly egalitarian. We need to see an end to white actors cast in non-white roles. It's not knee-jerk political correctness — it's justice for years of whitewashing in Hollywood. Recently in Doctor Strange, Gods of Egypt, Aloha and many others caucasian actors were cast in roles written or conceived for people of colour. Let's stop that in 2017.

MOVIE RATINGS by Richard Crouse

Hidden Figures ★★★★	HOW RATING WORKS
Silence ★★★★	★★★★ SEE IT
A Monster Calls ★★★	★★★ WORTHWHILE
	★★ UP TO YOU
	★ SKIP IT

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A tale of drug-smuggling Mennonites

NEW SERIES

Creator of CBC's Pure had hard time selling his idea

What if Walter White was a Mennonite?

Pure, which premieres Monday on CBC-TV, is based on actual accounts of Mennonites acting as drug mules. Various reports suggest some members were smuggling cocaine and marijuana into Canada all the way from Mexico by hiding drugs in hollowed-out car batteries and wheels of cheese.

Series writer and creator Michael Amo (The Listener) optioned one such magazine article nearly a decade ago but had a hard time selling networks on a Christian sect version of Breaking Bad.

"I couldn't get any traction on it," says Amo, whose Russian-immigrant grandparents were Mennonites. "I found there was a lot of resistance to the notion that this was even real."

Well-publicized busts involving drug mules in Calgary and southwestern Ontario helped open a few eyes, says Amo. Around the same time, so did the success of True Detective and Fargo, two dark dramas that proved there was an appetite for short-run series.

Shaw Media developed Pure for a while "then decided it wasn't for them," says Amo. That's when CBC stepped in, with the series going into production in Nova Scotia this past fall.

Key to the project was finding the right actor to play Noah Funk, the God-fearing head of the Mennonite community.

"Walter White's journey was all about a good man becoming bad," says Amo. "Our story is about a very good man becoming bad in deed, but always remaining good in heart and being tormented by all these transgressions."

Amo found his straight arrow leader in Ryan Robbins, a native of Victoria, B.C. with credits on everything from Arrow to "Continuum and Battlestar Galactica. Cleanshaven and sporting nerdy glasses, a straw hat and suspenders, Robbins looks the part. On the day of a press visit to a hillside location, director Ken Girotti — who helms all six episodes — has Funk take his frustrations out on a cellphone.

Pure, which premieres Monday on CBC-TV, is based on actual accounts of Mennonites acting as drug mules. CONTRIBUTED

Funk's un-Godly dilemma: he must betray a fellow Mennonite in order to rid his community of drug traffickers.

The plan backfires when drug kingpin Eli Voss (Peter Outerbridge) threatens Funk's family if he doesn't look the other way on the smuggling operation.

"He's trying to be true to his God and his family," says Robbins. "He thinks he can do all this and get back to the way things were before. He very quickly finds himself in (trouble)."

Encouraged by Girotti, Outerbridge (Orphan Black, ReGenesis) strives to portray Voss as pure evil.

"We decided I didn't want to have any facial expression," he says. "He should come across as that thing that Mennonite moms told their kids before they go to bed at night: make sure they do well in school or Eli Voss will come and get you."

Funk finds two unlikely allies in trying to bring Voss to justice: a former high school tormentor-turned misfit cop (played by Irish-born Canadian actor A.J. Buckley) and American drug enforcement agency officer Phoebe O'Reilly (Oscar nominee Rosie Perez).

"He's a degenerate, but he's honest about it," says Buckley of his character.

The Pure cast had one big challenge that had nothing with character development, however: making scenes shot in farm fields in Dartmouth in November look like rural Mexico.

"Especially when we're trying to hide the fact we can see our breath," says Robbins, "and the crew's all bundled up like Kenny from South Park."

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Sigourney Weaver as an 'unlovable' grandmother

A MONSTER CALLS

Sci-fi queen accepts a brand new challenge

Sigourney Weaver plays her first role as a grandmother in A Monster Calls. QUIM VIVES/FOCUS FEATURES VIA THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

As she portrayed a stern, emotionally reserved British matriarch in her latest film A Monster Calls, sci-fi queen Sigourney Weaver marked a career milestone — her first role as a grandmother.

The 67-year-old actress, famous for her Alien and Ghostbusters films among many others, said she jumped at the chance to be a part of the heart-wrenching fantasy drama directed by J.A. Bayona.

"I thought it was sort of fun," she said of playing a grandmother after a slew of iconic action roles. "It was a pleasure."

A Monster Calls, based on a novel of the same name by Patrick Ness, tells the story of Conor O'Malley, a young boy grappling with the looming death of his sick and rapidly weakening mother, who is played by Felicity Jones.

As Conor struggles with the reality of his mother's deteriorating condition, faces bullies at school, and deals with his long-distance father, he slips into the realm of fantasy. He begins encountering an enormous tree-like monster, voiced by Liam Neeson, who visits him nightly to tell him stories that end up carrying particular significance.

Conor is played by Scottish actor Lewis MacDougall, who was 12 at the time of filming.

Weaver plays Conor's seemingly frigid grandmother, seen as uptight and unfeeling by her grandson, but secretly battling her own emotions. She said she dug into her role by tapping into personal experiences.

"When you participate in a story like this you have to bring a lot of parts of yourself that you don't often use," Weaver said in an interview.

"In my case, I haven't been a grandmother but I'm certainly a mother and I'm a daughter. It was often a heart-rending experience, but at the same time the film is so uplifting."

Weaver noted, however, that it was a challenge playing a character that starts out being quite unlikeable.

"Playing someone who is trying so hard to love her family and they find her unlovable was very interesting to me," she said.

"I guess that to me was the challenge of it. To play someone who wanted so much to be of help and to be a support and her help or suggestions are rejected until finally all of that, her whole physical being ... all this armour that she has drops away and she's just this grandmother who is losing her daughter and trying to comfort her grandson."

Helping Weaver navigate her role was the fact that her own mother was English, a handy piece of family heritage that she drew on for the character.

"It's a very familiar accent and a very familiar world to me," she said. "Because my mother was English and they have a kind of formality, I just found that very interesting territory."

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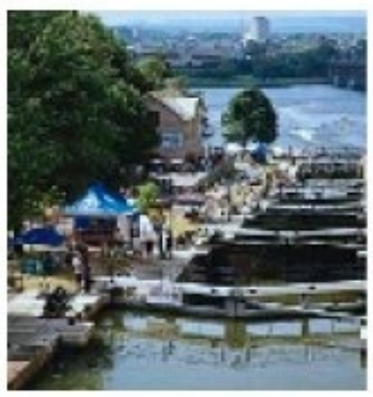
Your essential daily news

Disney's Tower of Terror took its final plunge Monday. It is getting a Marvel makeover.

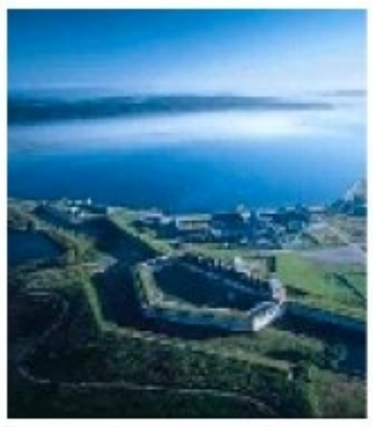
5 PARKS TO VISIT FOR CANADA'S 150TH

Parks Canada is celebrating the country's 150th birthday by offering free admission to every national park, historic site and marine conservation area from coast to coast. To date more than 1.7 million people have gone online to request a Discovery Pass. The pass represents great value for those eager to explore our country. Here are options for every adventure: **LOREN CHRISTIE/FOR METRO**



1 Best value

In addition to free entry, Parks Canada is offering free lockage on any of its historic canals and waterways. A six-metre boat that would cost $700 for a season's pass now costs nothing, making this the summer to ply our waterways including the Rideau Canal, Ontario's only UNESCO World Heritage site.



2 Best historic site

The Fortress of Louisbourg on Nova Scotia's Cape Breton Island is the largest historical re-creation in North America. Dozens of staff dressed as soldiers and townsfolk add the colour to the bricks and mortar of this reconstructed fort. The Discovery Pass will save a family approximately $40 on their entry fees.

THESE SPACES WON'T LAST

There are still fees and capacity restrictions applied to specialty programs and overnight accommodations, including campsites.

The reservations line for the west coast has just opened up with the rest of the country following. Visitors who want to pre-register for specialty programs can contact sites directly in the spring. There's normally no issue, but with the sesquicentennial, record numbers are predicted.

ALL PHOTOS PARKS CANADA

3 Best for exploring

Ontario's Pukaskwa National Park offers almost 100 km of trails to help visitors explore its protected ecosystem, which includes a boreal forest and a vast stretch of shoreline along Lake Superior. My father-in-law, who has camped his whole life, lists the views and sunsets from Pukaskwa as the best in the county.

4 Best to avoid the crowds

Banff and Jasper are the most popular national parks in the West. To avoid crowds consider visiting some of the other majestic Western parks, like Revelstoke or Waterton Lakes National Park, an international peace park shared with the United States. With an exceptional diversity of wildlife and a cozy little waterfront town to serve as a home base, Waterton makes a great alternative.

5 Best hidden gem

Quebec's Mingan Archipelago National Reserve Park lies on the far end of the highway on the north shore of the St Lawrence. It includes some thirty limestone islands, more than a 1000 granitic islets and reefs and an abundance of marine life including whales, dolphins and seals.

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Family of lion dancers ready to roar

CHINESE NEW YEAR

Ings kick off Year of Rooster at Spring Festival Parade

After Jun Ing performed as a lion dancer for the first time in Vancouver's Chinese New Year parade in the 1980s, he remembers wishing it had lasted longer.

Ing was dazzled by the crowds that came out to watch the traditional art form, in which costumed performers mimic the movements of lions, as well as the "lucky money" in red envelopes he collected from merchants.

Now decades later, his 17-year-old son, Angus Ing, gets the same thrill from dancing through the streets of the city's vibrant Chinatown every year.

"Initially he was kind of reluctant," said Jun Ing with a chuckle. "But when he saw that a lot of people were interested in lion dancing and the crowds and whatnot, he got inspired by it."

The father is the chief co-ordinator of the annual parade, officially titled the Chinatown Spring Festival Parade, as well as the vice-president of the Chinese Benevolent Association of Vancouver.

This year's parade, kicking off the Year of the Rooster, is set to take place Jan. 29. Featuring multicultural dance troupes, marching bands and martial arts performances, it has become a significant annual event in the city, drawing more than 100,000 spectators last year.

The event also boasts the largest assembly of traditional lion dance teams in Canada. The colourful performers are meant to ward off evil spirits, and they stop at stores along the parade route to retrieve envelopes of cash and bring the businesses good fortune.

Jun Ing said the Hoy Ping Benevolent Association of Canada lion dancer team has performed in the parade for about 10 years. It has become a family affair, with not only Angus Ing taking the reins as the head of one of the lions, but also his 19-year-old sister Alex Ing mastering the drums.

On a recent frigid weekday night, members of the team gathered in the Hoy Ping headquarters to practise. Angus Ing pulled a large ornate silver lion head over his own, while teammate Ricardo Ho crouched behind him, operating the tail.

Hoy Ping Athletic Group members, Angus Ing, front, 17, rolls across the floor as Nick Tim, top, 19, is hoisted by Amen Chan while practicing their lion dance routine for the Chinese New Year Parade, in Vancouver, B.C. THE CANADIAN PRESS/DARRYL DYCK

Using a lever inside the head to blink the eyes, Angus Ing began to embody the intimidating physicality of the animal. To the rhythm of an energetic drum beat, he and Ho confronted and play-fought with a pair of fellow dancers dressed as a glittering gold lion.

Angus Ing said it takes a lot of practice, athleticism and endurance to master lion dancing, but it's also a "lot of fun."

"You also get to spread the culture to the people that don't really understand it," he said. "It also woos them. They've never seen something like that, all the colours and the bright lights, and also the loud noises and the big kicks."

The performance involves impressive acrobatics too, with Ho, a larger-built man in his 30s, often hoisting his younger teammate high into the air.

In fact, Alex Ing, a University of British Columbia student with a keen sense of rhythm, said she decided to pick up the drumsticks in part because she was too afraid of heights to be a lion dancer. THE CANADIAN PRESS

IF YOU GO

A map of the parade route and list of attractions are available on the Chinese Benevolent Association of Vancouver's website: **cbavancouver.ca**

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metro SPORTS

"That's why I came here ... I know we can win the World Series ": Edwin Encarnacion after finalizing a three-year, $60-million deal in Cleveland

Hockey Canada looks for answers to empty seats

WORLD JUNIORS

Attendance down from past events held in Canada

International Ice Hockey Federation president Rene Fasel wonders if Montreal is a one-team town and that's why attendance has been weak at the world junior championship.

"Here, everyone says, there's one team — it's Canadiens, Canadiens, Canadiens," Fasel said Thursday. "Montreal is the Montreal Canadiens, there you go."

It certainly seems that way with the wide stretches of empty seats at the Bell Centre for a world junior tournament that was such a huge hit in Calgary and Edmonton in 2012 and in Ottawa in 2009.

Hockey Canada president Tom Renney said ticket pricing and sales strategies will be reviewed with an eye to boosting sales for the next time it is held in Canada in 2019 in Vancouver and Victoria.

In Alberta, total attendance hit 455,342, while in Ottawa it was 453,282.

But it drew only 366,370 in Canada's two largest cities in 2015 and will fall short of that when final figures come in for this year's event.

RED, WHITE AND BLUE — AND GOLD United States forward Colin White and Team Canada defenceman Kale Clague crash into goaltender Carter Hart during the gold-medal game of the world junior hockey championship in Montreal on Thursday night. Troy Terry scored the only goal in the shootout, and the U.S. won 5-4. PAUL CHIASSON/THE CANADIAN PRESS

While attendance was decent in Toronto, Montrealers balked at high ticket prices, especially for preliminary-round games not involving Canada. The best draw in the opening week was about 9,000 for Sweden-Finland, but for most games the building was nearly empty.

Fasel said that even with empty seats, the world juniors is still a big event in Canada.

"In 1997, we had the junior championship in Geneva and the total number of spectators for the tournament was 33,000, for all the games," he said. "I was at a game where there were about 20 spectators in the arena.

"Here in Montreal, we could expect more for sure. But for the young players, having the opportunity to play at the Air Canada Centre and the Bell Centre means something. Even if it's half full, you're on the ice of the Canadiens and that means something."

The IIHF stages the under-20 tournament at least every third year in Canada, where it has a much larger following than in Europe. Next year's world juniors will be in the border city of Buffalo, N.Y.

After Canada drew decent crowds, but not sell-outs, in group stage matches in Toronto last week, a gathering of only 10,215 turned out to the 21,000-seat Bell Centre for a quarter-final Tuesday against the Czech Republic.

After ticket prices were slashed, there were 13,456 for Canada's semifinal win Wednesday night over Sweden.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

BRONZE MEDAL

Denis Guryanov scored in overtime as Russia defeated Sweden 2-1 on Thursday in the bronze-medal game.

- Russian netminder Ilya Samsonov was brilliant, stopping 38 of 39 shots.
- The Russians have now won a medal for seven consecutive years. Sweden has finished fourth in three straight tournaments.

NFL PLAYOFFS

Seahawks fair game without Thomas

Until a month ago, the Seattle Seahawks never knew what it was like without Earl Thomas on the field.

Now they're finding out how much Thomas means to everything they try to accomplish defensively.

"Earl's a unique player. He's an extraordinary player, he's proven that," coach Pete Carroll said.

"No matter what position a guy plays, you miss that unique quality."

Since Thomas suffered a broken leg early in Seattle's Week 13 win over Carolina, the Seahawks have become vulnerable against the pass.

Earl Thomas
GETTY IMAGES

In the final four games of the regular season, the opponent passer rating against the Seahawks was 105.0. In the first 12 games, it was 77.9. And while that final four-game stretch included stellar games by Aaron Rodgers and Carson Palmer in a pair of Seattle losses, it also included performances by Jared Goff, Case Keenum and Colin Kaepernick that didn't lead to wins against Seattle but were probably better than most expected.

Now come the pass-happy Detroit Lions in the NFC wild-card round on Saturday.

"I wouldn't say vulnerable, you know, they're a heck of a defence," Detroit quarterback Matthew Stafford said. "They do a great job. Obviously, Earl brings a mentality to them. He's an extremely aggressive player ... but I mean they've got a great defence."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SPEEDSKATING

McLean races to pair of victories

Speedskater Heather McLean finished first in two races on Thursday at the Canadian national single distance championship.

McLean of Winnipeg, won the second 500-metre race of the week in 37.39 seconds, then raced to a personal best 1:14.99 in the 1,000 metres.

Kaylin Irvine of Calgary finished second in the 1,000 and third overall in the 500 after the two races.

Irvine and McLean will represent Canada in the 1,000 metres at the 2017 ISU world single distance championships.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Heather McLean
GETTY IMAGES FILE

TENNIS

Match-fixing resurfaces ahead of Australian Open

Match-fixing in tennis is back on the radar, less than two weeks before the Australian Open.

Victoria state police on Thursday charged an 18-year-old man following an investigation by detectives from the Sporting Integrity Intelligence Unit into allegations of match-fixing at a lower-tier tournament in Traralgon, 160 kilometres southeast of Melbourne, in October. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NHL

Caps deny Jackets a piece of history

Columbus delivered a clunker in its try for a historic win.

The Blue Jackets lost 5-0 to the Washington Capitals on Thursday night, ending their winning streak at 16 games, one shy of the NHL record.

Columbus lost for the first time since Nov. 26, ending a captivating run for coach John Tortorella's team that fell short of the 1992-93 Pittsburgh Penguins' record of 17 consecutive wins.

The Capitals kept the Blue Jackets' league-leading power play off the board in five chances, and Daniel Winnik, John Carlson, Nate Schmidt, Andre Burakovsky and Justin Williams scored to chase goalie Sergei Bobrovsky. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

THURSDAY in D.C.

5	0
CAPITALS	JACKETS

WILD-CARD SKED

SATURDAY
Raiders at Texans, 3:30 p.m.
Lions at Seahawks, 7 p.m.

SUNDAY
Dolphins at Steelers, 12 p.m.
Giants at Packers, 3:30 p.m.

MAKE IT TONIGHT

Lovely Roasted Vegetable Pizza

PHOTO: MAYA VISNYEI

Ceri Marsh & Laura Keogh
For Metro Canada

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- 3 mini potatoes
- 1 small beet
- 1/2 yellow zucchini
- 1/3 red onion
- 1 carrot
- 1 or 2 stalks of fresh rosemary
- 2 Tbsp olive oil
- salt and pepper
- flat bread or prepared pizza crust
- 1 1/2 cups grated Fontina cheese

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Slice vegetables very thinly, particularly potatoes. Place them on a baking sheet. Drizzle with oil, season with rosemary leaves and salt and pepper. Give everything a toss and then spread them out evenly on the sheet.

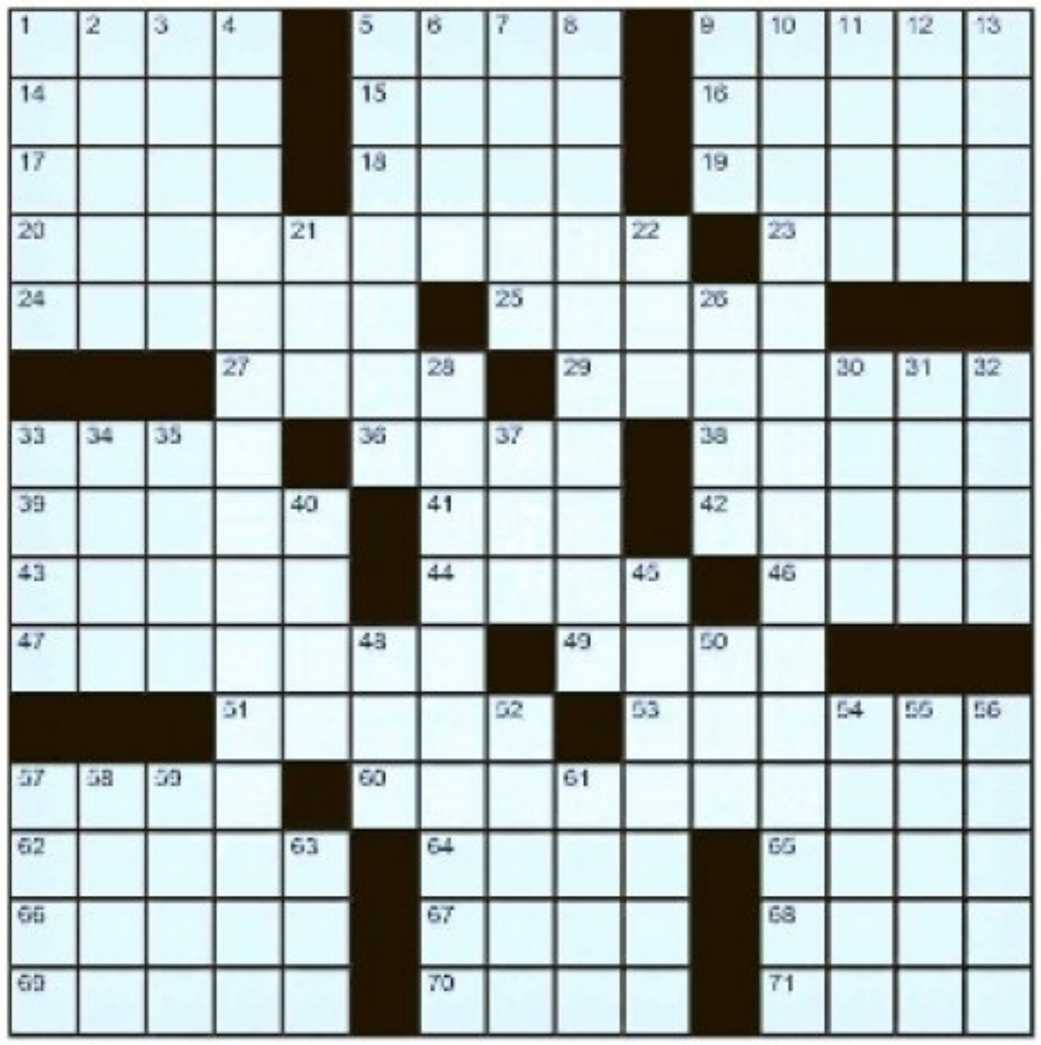
2. Bake for about 15 minutes, until vegetables are tender. Remove from the oven.

3. Place flat bread or pizza crust on another baking sheet. Arrange cooked vegetables, including the rosemary, on top. Sprinkle cheese evenly across. Pop the whole thing back in the oven for 7 or 8 minutes, until the cheese is melted and beginning to brown.

FOR MORE MEAL IDEAS, VISIT SWEETPOTATOCHRONICLES.COM

CROSSWORD Canada Across and Down

BY KELLY ANN BUCHANAN



ACROSS
1. The __, Jeff Bridges' role in "The Big Lebowski" (1998)
5. Dr.'s scheduled time
9. James Cameron directed movie, "The __" (1989)
14. Cast-__ pan
15. "__ Window" (1954)
16. Hope
17. __-dong!
18. Scotch __
19. White wine of Italy
20. It is Nunavut's southernmost community
23. Staff on a plane
24. Feudal lords
25. Ghost's quarters
27. Ms. Gabor's
29. Justin Bieber album: '__ 2.0'
33. Paul Bunyan's blue ox
36. Brood of pheasants
38. Sia song
39. Once-__ (Quick inspections)
41. Not specialized [abbr.]
42. Seal
43. Illuminated the candle again
44. Actresses Ms. Naldi or Ms. Talbot
46. Traverse the seas
47. City in Spain
49. Cinch
51. Rankle
53. Canadian actress/soprano, Deanna __ (b.1921 - d.2013)
57. Territory
60. Quinoa, blueberries, sweet potatoes and seaweed ...to name just a few
62. Space denizen
64. Drove
65. Type of acid
66. Tropical bean tree
67. Hosp. heart recordings
68. Largest lake of Ethiopia which is the source of the Blue Nile River
69. Disagreeable sorts
70. Tal Bachman's "__ So High"
71. Dutch for 'city'

DOWN
1. "Say that thou __ forsake me..." - Shakespeare
2. Dickensian schemer Mr. Heep
3. Ms. Pescow of "Saturday Night Fever" (1977)
4. Achievement such as the CN Tower: 2 wds.
5. __ breads (Handmade loaves)
6. Ring loudly
7. __ New Guinea
8. Spa specialties
9. Li'l notices in newspapers
10. Alternatives to the Alfalfa ones: 2 wds.
11. 2017
12. Keep
13. Diving duck
21. Mr. Spacey, to pals
22. Shortened amount
26. "__ Here" by Beyonce
28. 'John Hancock', and others
30. Latvia's capital
31. Nero's 57
32. Computer company
33. Villainous group in the 'Star Trek' universe, The __
34. Solemnly affirm
35. Mr. Lugosi
37. Vox populi, vox __
40. Twinkler
45. Bond Girl, Ursula __
48. "__ Boot" (1981)
50. Canadian rocker, Melissa __ der Maur
52. Historical time
54. TV reporter from Kazakhstan in the movies
55. "Let It Go" singer Ms. Menzel
56. Visual arts univ. in Halifax
57. Breath mints, tic __
58. __ Bator, Mongolia
59. Puerto __
61. Knife part
63. Tel. book listings

IT'S ALL IN THE STARS Your daily horoscope by Francis Drake

Aries March 21 - April 20
You might join forces with a boss or someone in a position of authority to introduce reforms and improvements to where you work. Why not run it up the flagpole to see if anyone salutes?

Taurus April 21 - May 21
Do not try to coerce others into agreeing with your politics or your religion today. Everyone is allowed to believe in what they want to believe in, including you.

Gemini May 22 - June 21
This is a poor day to discuss how to share or divide something, especially an inheritance. People are too passionate and too emotional.

Cancer June 22 - July 23
Resist the urge to try to give a makeover to someone close to you. This person will not see your suggestions as improvements. Instead, he or she will hear them as criticisms.

Leo July 24 - Aug. 23
Speak up with your ideas about how to improve your job or work environment. Someone might listen to you today. Who knows?

Virgo Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
Be patient with children today. Meanwhile, lovers will find that this is a passionate, memorable day! Oh yeah.

Libra Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
Family discussions will be intense today. You might want to deflect some of this energy into making repairs to the bathroom or anything to do with laundry, garbage and recycling.

Scorpio Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
Your words are very persuasive today. That's why this is a strong day for those of you who sell, market and write.

Sagittarius Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
Be careful when shopping today, because you might become obsessed with needing to have something. This is not the right frame of mind for spending money.

Capricorn Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
Take a realistic look in the mirror today and ask yourself what you can do to improve your image. Why not look your best?

Aquarius Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
Research will reveal secrets today, almost certainly. Deciding what to do with these secrets is your challenge. The most important thing is kindness. Do not harm others.

Pisces
Feb. 20 - March 20
A powerful friend might persuade you to change your goals today. Or perhaps you are the powerful friend persuading someone else. A healthy friendship allows for differences and respects them.

CONCEPTIS SUDOKU by Dave Green

Every row, column and box contains 1-9

					1	8	9	4
	1	4		8			7	
	8		6			5		
		8			9			
	5				3			
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4						2		

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8	9	2	1	6	7	4	3	5
7	6	5	3	8	4	1	9	2
6	7	9	2	3	8	5	4	1
2	1	8	4	5	6	9	7	3
5	4	3	7	1	9	8	2	6
1	5	7	9	4	3	2	6	8
3	8	4	6	2	1	7	5	9
9	2	6	8	7	5	3	1	4

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